

11 September 2009. Press Release.

The first group of Tongan seasonal workers employed under the Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) departed to Tonga yesterday, Thursday, 10 September 2009 after the completion of seven (7) months employment at horticultural farms in Australia namely Victoria and Queensland.

Prior to departure, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship organized on Thursday, 03 September 2009 at 1830hrs an Information Session with the Tongan community at the Pulela'a Hall, Glendenning, Sydney. The session was an update of the PSWPS and outlined benefits of the Scheme to Australia as well as the home country of the workers. Officials from various Australian Government Departments were present as well as the Deputy High Commissioner of the Tonga High Commission, Dr Leimoni Taufu'i.

A Pre-Departure Programme for the Tongan seasonal workers was co-organized by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and All Recruiting Services (Labor Hire Company) in which the following included:

Tuesday, 08 September 2009: Pre-return workshop

- Included completion of Tax and Superannuation Forms, session with Westpac Bank, Pre-departure briefing by AusAID/DEEWR and Evaluation from the World Bank and TNS.

Wednesday, 09 September 2009:

- Football Tournament; and
- Farewell Ceremony

The initial group of 50 Tongan workers arrived Australia in February 2009. 3 workers were compassionately pardoned to depart early to Tonga due to the loss of immediate family members on the MV Princess Ashika tragedy. 47 of the 50 seasonal Tongan workers departed on Pacific Blue from Sydney International Airport to Tonga yesterday.

End.

Source: *Tonga High Commission, Cabberra, Australia.*